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ABSTRACT

The Teaching Resources Center (TRC) at American River College in California was developed to improve instruction and offer a variety of activities and services to faculty. Colleges interested in establishing a similar program should recognize that the development of a TRC requires planning, implementation, and evaluation. The planning phase begins with a group of faculty in touch with the college and its faculty's needs and interests. Other planning steps include visiting an existing center, gaining administrative and faculty support, defining the purposes and functions of the TRC, and developing a precise plan and timeline for the first year. Decisions must be made concerning location, staffing, resources, equipment, and budget. The implementation phase involves the purchase of necessary materials, supplies, and equipment, the creation of an advisory committee representing various instructional interests, the development of a resource list, the use of established vehicles to publicize the TRC, and the opening of the center. The evaluation phase requires accurate records and a follow-up system to obtain feedback from participants. (ALB)

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GUIDELINES FOR ESTABLISHING A TEACHING RESOURCES CENTER

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GUIDELINES FOR ESTABLISHING A TEACHING RESOURCES CENTER

INTRODUCTION

The following suggestions are offered to educational institutions interested in developing a Teaching Resources Center similar to that at American River College in Sacramento, CA. The TRC was developed to improve instruction at the college and offers a wide range of activities and services to faculty. For a complete description of the program, see the Teaching Resources Center brochure published by American River College.

PLANNING

1. A decision to establish a Teaching Resources Center and the impetus to begin planning and implementation ideally begins with a group of faculty. These faculty should be in tune with the institution and the faculty, and perceptive to faculty by needs and interests.
2. The first step in establishing a Center should be to visit an existing Center. Talk to the Center staff and to faculty and administrators on the campus. Determine what aspects of the Center would work for you, find out how they got started, what problems they encountered and how they were resolved.
3. An important step in establishing a Center is to get administrative support. Taking appropriate administrators on visits to other Centers and involving them in your discussions and plans are good ways to build support.
4. Your planning for your TRC should include a clear definition of the purpose of the Center and what its functions will be. While the Center will probably grow and evolve, a precise plan and timeline for the first year is essential. A philosophy statement may also be developed, tying the Center to institutional goals and purposes.

5. Once you have developed the purpose and functions, you will need to consider the following:

   a. Location - Where will the Center be located? Considerations should include a central location with good visibility. Ideally the space allocated for the Center will be large enough for small seminars and workshops. If not, space for such activities needs to be considered.

   b. Staffing -- How will the Center be staffed? Will it be from existing staff? What functions will the staff perform (writing job descriptions is a good idea)? What kind of background or training should the staff have? How much time will they devote to the Center? How will they be selected?

   c. Resources -- What kinds of resources and materials will be needed? What printed or AV materials are currently available through the campus library? What additional materials should be purchased? Will you use outside speakers?

   d. Equipment -- What equipment will be needed? Consider telephone, typewriter, copy machine, etc..

   e. Budget -- Develop, based on the above, a realistic budget for the first year.

6. Once you know what you want to do and what it will cost, you will need to get administrative support before proceeding.

7. This is a good time to communicate with the faculty at large. Use your Faculty Senate, if appropriate. Describe the program and how it will benefit faculty, students and the institution. Broad-based support will facilitate your program being accepted. Remember: you need administrative <u>and</u> faculty support for success.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. When your plan has been approved by the administration, you will move into the implementation stage -- that is, translating your plan into action.
2. It will take time to set the Center up physically -- and to purchase necessary materials, supplies and equipment. If new staff is to be hired, this also takes time. Make sure you allow sufficient start-up time before you open the Center.
3. An important resource for a Center is an Advisory Committee, with representation from the various instructional areas. This committee can provide two-way communication to and from the Center and can offer good suggestions on activities, resources and speakers. The committee should meet regularly and be given a meaningful role.
4. Develop your resource list -- what are the human sources on your campus and in the vicinity that can be used by the Center.
5. Determine how you will open the Center. An Open House is one technique. Determine what you will feature and how. Be sure and issue a personal invitation to the President, perhaps your Board of Trustees and key administrators.
6. Begin your publicity early -- let the campus community know what and who you are. Use established communication vehicles (i.e., the campus newsletter, the student newspaper) as well as your own flyers, notices and posters. You may wish to develop your own newsletter. You may also wish to consider developing a brochure, video tape or slide tape show describing the Center. You will want to publicize the Center as a comprehensive program as well as individual activities.

7. Begin your program. Use the committee to help publicize the Center in instructional areas. Have committee members call faculty members they think will be interested in a particular service or activity. Use campus opinion-makers and leaders -- invite them to the Center and to activities. They will help spread the word. Word of mouth is one of the best ways to publicize and gain support for your program.

EVALUATION

1. Whether or not your project is externally funded, you will want to keep good records and determine how you will evaluate specific services and activities as well as the program as a whole. This information will be necessary to justify the program during the annual budget development process. Some suggestions:
   a. Keep accurate records of service users and participants in activities. Keep both total user/attendance counts and an unduplicated count (showing how many different staff members participated).
   b. Develop a follow-up system to get feedback from service users or activity participants. This is useful not only in evaluating the service or activity, but in getting new ideas.
   c. Determine the criteria by which the program as a whole will be evaluated and the data that will need to be collected. This should be done early.
   d. Present your evaluation data in an annual report that is readable and has necessary backup data.

CONCLUSION

Once you have your Teaching Resources Center established, the most important thing is to continue to assess and meet the needs of the institution and its faculty. You may find after the first year or two that some aspects of your program are no longer viable, and that new interests and needs have emerged. To be successful, a TRC must be flexible in meeting these needs. This requires constant and close contact with the faculty, and ways of getting both verbal and written feedback

As you develop your program, keep in touch with staff development staff at other colleges. Find out what they are doing. Ask for copies of their brochures, newsletter and other materials.

Spring planning sessions with the Advisory Committee is one good way of getting broad input and having your program well defined for the coming year.

Using the expertise of your own staff is both a cost-effective and sound way of enhancing your program. Faculty sharing ideas and techniques with other faculty builds a stimulating collegiate atmosphere. Using faculty from other institutions in your area is another cost-effective approach.

Finally, avoid allowing your Center to become the bailiwick of any one department or group of people. To be truly successful, a TRC must involve and be responsive to all the disciplines in an institution.

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